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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DJIBOUTI 000435

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/05/04

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [DJ](#) [ER](#) [SO](#)

SUBJECT: Djiboutian President Requests USG Help On Border Dispute  
with Eritrea and Training Somali Security Forces

CLASSIFIED BY: James Swan, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(A), (B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary and action request: President Ismail Omar Guelleh summoned Ambassador on short notice May 2 to make specific requests for (1) urgent USG diplomatic support for UN Security Council action to press Eritrea to implement UNSCR 1862; and (2) USG assistance with a GODJ program to train Somali security forces, beginning in June in Djibouti. Senior GODJ officials have previously made general requests for USG support in these areas, but this is the first specific appeal directly from the President. Post recommends a favorable response to these requests, and seeks Department guidance by COB May 8. End summary and action request.

Council Action on Djibouti/Eritrea Border

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¶2. (C) President Guelleh (who was joined by Foreign Minister Mahmoud Ali Youssouf) said he had waited "too, too, too long" for the Security Council to act in response to Eritrea's failure to respect UNSCR 1862, which calls for Eritrea to withdraw its troops to status-quo-ante positions on the border and to participate in diplomatic efforts to resolve the boundary dispute. The Council was at risk of "losing its way" on the Djibouti/Eritrea border issue. He said he had just learned that the Mexican PermRep in New York, on the eve of turning over the Council presidency, had informed other Council members that there appeared to be no appetite for further measures against Eritrea to ensure implementation of UNSCR 1862. Yet, at the April 29-30 meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana, attended by FonMin Youssouf, the 118 member states endorsed Djibouti's call for implementation of the resolution, with only Eritrea expressing its reservations. Blaming the French PermRep in New York as the principal "brake" on Council action against Eritrea, Guelleh said he had told the French Ambassador in Djibouti that he no longer wanted the French Mission to the UN to take the lead on Djibouti/Eritrea matters. The President appealed for the USG to work together with the GODJ to

ensure robust follow-up to UNSCR 1862. He sought a coordinated diplomatic effort with the USG to achieve this objective.

13. (C) Ambassador said he would convey to the Department and USUN the GODJ request for USG help in getting the UNSC to act on implementation of UNSCR 1862. He noted that the U.S. had worked closely with the GODJ and PermRep Robleh Olhaye on the UNSC Presidential Statement of June 12, 2008 and on UNSCR 1862, both of which were highly favorable to the GODJ. Djibouti would also need to garner support from its other close bilateral partners on the Council, including the three African members, Turkey, and Japan (which uses Djibouti as a hub for its counter-piracy operations). If indeed the French agreed to give up the pen and would no longer take the lead on Djibouti/Eritrea issues, this could open options for an African member perhaps to play a more prominent role and bring new energy to the issue.

#### GODJ Training of Somalia Security Forces

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14. (C) Turning to his second point, Guelleh said that the GODJ st GODJ personnel working with the Somalis. Ambassador noted the request and agreed to convey it to the Department, commenting that while President Guelleh and the GODJ had previously called in general terms for the USG to provide training and financial support to the Somali security forces, this was the first specific request for us to do so.

16. (C) In making this request to us, Guelleh expressed frustration with the French, who he said were "backing away" from earlier commitments made publicly by Foreign Minister Kouchner to train Somalis in Djibouti. Confirming information we had heard from French military officers, Guelleh said the French now want to offer training only for one month (which he said is too short to be of use) and not start until October (which is too late).

#### Comment and Action Request

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17. (C) The USG has a strong partnership with Djibouti, which hosts the only U.S. military base in sub-Saharan Africa, a 600,000-watt Voice of America and Radio Sawa broadcast facility, the only USAID humanitarian pre-positioning warehouse outside CONUS, and important port facilities used for refueling and re-supply of U.S. navy vessels. The GODJ has also been a close ally as we have worked together to advance reconciliation in Somalia through the "Djibouti Process." President Guelleh is now appealing to us as partners to assist Djibouti with its two greatest regional security concerns: Eritrea and Somalia.

18. (C) On Eritrea, we recommend consultations through State/AF and USUN with Djiboutian PermRep Robleh Olhaye -- double-tracked by Embassy Djibouti with Foreign Minister Youssef -- to develop a coordinated diplomatic strategy to mobilize UNSC members to apply greater pressure to Eritrea to implement UNSCR 1862. Measures could include targeted sanctions aimed at travel by GSE leadership and at financial transactions involving parastatal enterprises and firms affiliated with the GSE ruling party. We would welcome input from Embassy Asmara as to which measures would be most effective in influencing GSE behavior.

¶9. (C) On GODJ training for the Somali forces, we believe this proposal also merits support, but would defer to the Embassy Nairobi Somalia Unit. Support for the GODJ training program would advance not only our partnership with Djibouti, but also the USG's efforts to support TFG security forces. The GODJ has a small but professional military, with many units that have previously benefited from U.S. training in close protection techniques (including a course for the Republican Guard completed in April). GODJ instructors would offer the added benefit of familiarity with the regional threat environment as well as Somali language skills. USG military assets and personnel already available in Djibouti though the Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa and Camp Lemonier could, if so directed, respond rapidly to the GODJ request for training and facility repair. We recommend proceeding with working-level discussions among Embassy Djibouti, CJTF-HOA/Camp Lemonier, GODJ, and the TFG military representatives currently in Djibouti so that we may learn more details of the planned training; identify specific needs for transportation, course instruction, and facility rehabilitation; and explain USG requirements for vetting. This information could then be considered by the interagency to enable a quick decision whether to provide USG support as requested by the GODJ.  
further details of this conversation. End Note.)

¶15. (C) The President requested USG support in three specific areas: (1) transporting the NSF trainees from Somalia to Djibouti; (2) rehabilitating GODJ training facilities in Hol-Hol and Ali Sabieh; and (3) providing trainers to assist GODJ personnel working with the Somalis. Ambassador noted the request and agreed to convey it to the Department, commenting that while President Guelleh and the GODJ had previously called in general terms for the USG to provide training and financial support to the Somali security forces, this was the first specific request for us to do so.

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¶10. (U) Action request: Please provide Department guidance by COB Friday, May 8, so that we can respond to President Guelleh's requests within one week.

SWAN